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SUBJECT: SLOW, INCREMENTAL PROGRESS IN ABYEI

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The CPA parties met in Juba the weekend of July 4/5 to address remaining questions on the Abyei roadmap, including the arbitration mechanism and the interim administration. An additional document on the arbitration will likely be presented to the GNU Presidency this week, to which State/L advisor Sanford provided input. However, the parties did not make any progress on naming an interim administration and remain stuck on the question of whether a Misseriya should be named to the Deputy Administrator position. SAF 31st brigade made some small steps toward departing Abyei town July 4-6, although the redeployment is far from complete. End summary.

#### ARBITRATION MECHANISM -----

¶2. (SBU) SPLM Minister for Presidential Affairs Luka Biong Deng met with the Consul General and Christina Sanford, State Department Legal Counsel, to discuss the arbitration agreement. Biong Deng expects the final arbitration protocol to be signed later this week. Deng shared with ConGen and Sanford the latest version of the Abyei Arbitration Protocol, which was to be signed later this week in Khartoum although delays in the interim administration (see below) might delay this. In reviewing the document, Sanford suggested several changes to clarify and refine the protocol. Biong Deng was grateful for the advice and indicated he welcomed continuing US participation and advice on helping them to manage the process.

#### INTERIM ADMINISTRATION -----

¶3. (SBU) NCP negotiators Yahia Bebiker and Dirdeiry Ahmed Mohammed told polchief July 6 that negotiations in Juba over the weekend regarding Abyei were "deadlocked." State Minister of Humanitarian Affairs (and ICC indictee) Ahmed Haroun, Dirdeiry, and Bebiker spent the weekend negotiating with SPLM representatives Deng Alor (GNU Foreign Minister), Biong Deng, and northern sector SG Yasir Arman. Deng Alor and Ahmed Haroun reportedly spent almost an entire night negotiating on the issue but were not able to reach a compromise. Dirdeiry said the NCP position is that the deputy should be a Misseriya, given that there are some Misseriya villages within the interim Abyei borders. He said that based on the agreement between the parties, the only criteria for the Abyei interim leadership is that they should be from the area and should not have been directly involved in the fighting. Biong Deng indicated to CG that the interim administrator would not now be SPLA General Arop Mayak, as reported by others in the SPLM earlier, but he declined to name who he thought it would be. The issue would be settled later this week, he said, when Kiir met with Bashir in Khartoum. (Note: Biong Deng later clarified that Kiir might not travel to Khartoum this week due to illness, and negotiators from the NCP confirmed that due to the impasse on the interim administration, Kiir would likely remain in Juba. End note.)

#### SAF BEGINS REDEPLOYMENT OF 31ST BRIGADE -----

14. (SBU) According to reports from UNMIS, the SAF 31st brigade began tentatively redeploying out of Abyei town on July 4. Several units reportedly redeployed to Difra July 4 and continued to Muglad July

15. UNMIS observers in Abyei reported July 7 that several SAF companies were still in the town but appeared to be packing up their equipment and preparing to leave. At SRSQ Qazi's meeting with President Bashir last week, Bashir reportedly said he was committed to fully withdrawing the entire brigade from Abyei. Regarding the deployment of police, Biong Deng indicated that the NCP had moved its own police force into Abyei, but that the SPLM had asked them to leave. The new Abyei police force of about 700 individuals was due to start arriving July 7, to be largely composed of people from the Abyei region, and the chief of this force was to be a half brother of Minister Biong Deng.

PRESSURE FOR IDPS TO MOVE

15. (SBU) Biong Deng decried the lack of assistance the IDPs are receiving in helping them return to their homes. Their most pressing need is temporary shelters and basic household utensils that will allow them to return to Abyei and live until their homes can be rebuilt. He claimed the UN and the international community are not doing enough, at this time, to provide these items. Embassy will set up a meeting with Biong Deng and USAID to inform him of USG support to date for Abyei.

COMMENT

16. (SBU) The decision to move the SAF out of Abyei is a very

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positive development and we will be watching closely to see if the entire brigade redeploys to Muglad and stays out of the disputed region. The lack of progress on the interim administration is not a surprise, but given the ethnic dimension this issue must not be allowed to fester. The parties should consider creative solutions such as rotating the deputy or even creating two deputy slots so they can move beyond this potentially destabilizing impasse. Although there are almost no Misseriya within the borders of Abyei, and in their comments to us the Misseriya have not identified the deputy administrator position as a make-or-break issue, the SPLM must find a way to ensure that Misseriya interests (primarily migration and development concerns) are represented. Regarding the Abyei IDPs, it is critical that they not be pushed to return until it is safe to do so; we will continue to pass that message to the SPLM.

FERNANDEZ